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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Friday, May 12, 1939

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "LEAFY, GREEN VEGETABLES" - Information from the Bureau of Home Economics
U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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What I'm going to say today--about leafy, green vegetables--came to me from the Federal Bureau of Home Economics. In a minute or two I'll pass on to you their recommendations for cooking these vegetables--and some of their suggestions for seasoning.

But first, just for the sake of the record--and a brief review--here's the short, short story of the food value of leafy, green vegetables.

Today, nutritionists list them among our "protective foods"--that is foods that should be included in all our diets because of the valuable contributions they make in food value.

And here are some of those contributions.

"Leafy, green vegetables merit a place on the list of protective foods chiefly because they are rich in both iron and vitamin A. In fact, the thinner and greener the leaf, the richer they are in both. Many of them are also very rich sources of calcium. And these three nutrients--calcium, iron, vitamin A--are food essentials in which American diets are often low.

"Green leaves are also excellent sources of vitamin G. And thrown in for good measure are considerable amounts of vitamin C and vitamin B₁. In addition, these vegetables contribute bulk to the diet. And some bulk or roughage is usually desirable in the diets of persons in normal health.

"With all that array of food values under one cover it's no wonder that nutritionists consider leafy, green vegetables on the "must" list of foods. They

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advise at least one serving a day either of these or of a yellow vegetable--for everyone in the family."

As to just which of the many kinds of leafy, green vegetables the homemaker serves--that's up to the family taste and pocket book. Some varieties fit in better with limited budgets than others, because they supply the same minerals and vitamins more economically. But no matter what the variety--there should be some sort of greens the year round.

"In the spring and early summer, wild "greens" that grow in vacant lots and in meadows are there to improve and add variety to menus just for the gathering. During the spring and summer, too, most vegetables are plentiful on local markets, because of large production in nearby market gardens. And home gardens can be planted so that they supply some sort of greens up until the first frost."

With all this green material coming on you may want to check up on ways of cooking. And here are the recommendations of the Bureau of Home Economics I promised at the beginning of this broadcast.

"In a nutshell, the cooking technique is--'Cook as quickly as possible. Use little or no water. Use the cooking water if that's possible. And, after the water starts to boil, leave the pan uncovered.'

"Behind this brief rule are a number of scientific 'whys'. Some of the vitamins are destroyed by heat. Certain vitamins and mineral salts are dissolved in the cooking water and lost if that is thrown away. A short cooking period reduces the amount of vitamin loss by heating. Using little or no water makes it easier to make use of any valuable liquid that's left over.

"Leave the lid off the pan. That rule's chiefly to keep the appetizing green color of these leafy vegetables. With the breakdown of the cell walls of the vegetable in cooking, certain acids are released that will play havoc with the green coloring matter if they are not allowed to go off into the air in steam. Of course, it's all right to leave the lid on the pan until the steam begins to form.

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"Some cooks would make sure that this green does not turn dull olive or ugly brown by adding a pinch of soda to the cooking water to neutralize these acids. But this practice is wasteful of food value, because all vitamins are more easily destroyed in alkaline than in acid water. And an overamount of soda also leaves the greens limp and poor in flavor."

And as to the time of cooking greens--naturally that's different with different vegetables.

"Greens properly cooked will still have some of their crispness. For an amount of beet greens and swiss chard that's enough for 5 or 6 servings--cooking will take about 10 minutes. For spinach, this same amount will take from 5 to 8 minutes. These cooking times are for the leaves only. If stems are included, cooking will take a little longer. Tender stalks may also be used but it's a good idea to cut them in pieces about one inch long so they'll cook faster."

For the seasoning of leafy, green vegetables, there are no such definite rules as there are for cooking. But here are a few suggestions.

"If the greens are of especially good flavor--a little butter, cream, and salt, and pepper will probably be all the seasoning you'll want. Slices of hard-cooked egg and slivers of crisp bacon sprinkled over the top of the dish also go well with greens. Or strips of cooked bacon may be put over each serving.

"If the greens need a little more seasoning, put finely minced pepper, onions, or parsley into the cooking liquid. Serve hot with lemon slices or vinegar."

And that is the last of my suggestions for cooking and seasoning leafy, green vegetables.

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